

CROSSING CULTURAL FRONTIERS: THE COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRIES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Conference Report

Crossing Cultural Frontiers: The Communications Industries in the Asia-Pacific Region, a joint conference organised by the University of Canberra and its sister university, Thammasat University in Bangkok, Thailand was held from 28 to 29 April 1997 at the Hyatt Hotel in Canberra. Situated on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin, the Hyatt Hotel was originally opened in 1924 to host parliamentarians. Having been restored to its former art deco glory reminiscent of the style and elegance of the 1920s, it was a very pleasant venue for the conference.

In recognition of the rapid expansion of the communications industries in the Asia Pacific region, this was the third in a series of communications conferences organised jointly by the two universities. Professor Don Aitken, Vice Chancellor of the University of Canberra and HE Madame Laxanachantorn Laohaphan, Royal Thai Ambassador to Australia officially opened the Conference, with The Hon Tim Fischer, MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade giving the keynote address. The Welcome reception at the Hyatt Hotel and the Conference dinner at the Canberra Yacht Club provided a valuable opportunity to meet and talk with about one hundred delegates from Australia and countries throughout Asia.

The conference examined the dramatic effects that technological change is having on the regional cultures of the rapidly industrialising societies of the region, exploring the business and operating environments for the communications industries in those countries. Presentations covered regulatory, social and public interest issues; cultural changes and the impact on education and community values. Focusing on the impact of these technological changes, against the wide variety of cultural backgrounds in which the communications industries operate, a range of distinguished international speakers from both the public and private sector environments, including several speakers from the media, identified the key issues for government and business consideration.

The varied two-day programme of individual papers and panel discussions covered topics such as Business by Television, News Flow in the Asia Pacific Region: Is the Public Interest being served? The Trend of the Chinese Press Circle; Issues in Telecommunication Development in Thailand; Commerce, Culture and Change in Modern Asia; The expansion in the Communications Industries; Impact on the Traditional Cultures and Education in Vietnam; Teaching in Absentia - Some Evolving Paradigms;

Communications Service Delivery to the Developing Countries of Asia: A Practical Approach; Murdochs of the Mufossil? Owners of Indian-Language Newspapers and Communication in the Asia-Pacific - Future Directions.

The University of Canberra and Thammasat University are to be congratulated for organising a most interesting and successful conference on a theme which is important to us all.

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